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**Senate Republican Caucus Chair**

Committees: Financial Institutions, Housing and Insurance; Health and Long-Term Care;  
Ways and Means; Rules

**August 12, 2009**

Dear Friends,

I hope you are enjoying our beautiful summer. It's been a busy one for me with cherry harvest in late July, plus working on a number of local and even national and international issues that will affect all of us in the 12th District and around the state of Washington.

**Visit to Canada a productive one**

From June 21 to 30 I participated in the "2009 Rising State Leader" program, a new event organized by the Canadian Embassy. Each year the Embassy gives a selected number of state legislators from around the United States an opportunity to take part in this 10-day working tour of Canada. The delegation meets with Canadian business and government leaders and learning about issues important to both countries.

Highlights of the trip included meetings with the co-chairs of the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and provincial elected officials from Manitoba and British Columbia. We also toured the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) Winnipeg facility, the Alberta oil sands (the world's second-largest oil reserves), the Peace Arch Border Crossing facility, and the Vancouver Port Authority.

The topics discussed included border security, energy, tourism and trade. These key issues affect the lives of people across our state and specifically here in the 12th District, which shares a border with Canada.

It was a real honor to be selected to take part in this event, especially because participants are nominated by the Canadian Embassy and the Canadian Consulates General and applications for the program are not accepted.

**Working on reopening the Upper Stehekin Valley Road**

On July 30 I had the opportunity to testify before Congress in support of reopening the upper portion of the Stehekin Valley Road. This road, also called the "road to Cottonwood Camp," has been in place since the 19th century – long before the North Cascades National Park was created in 1968, and even before my grandfather worked on one of the original small ferries that traveled from Chelan to Stehekin in 1899.

In 2003, a historic flood wiped out a portion of the road and eliminated vehicle access into the park. Three years later the National Park Service completed an environmental assessment on road, and nearly everyone who offered comments supported reopening the road. The most viable way to do so was to move a small portion of the road away from the river to the spot where the pioneers built the road in the 19th century. The idea did not advance, however, because the National Parks Service said the federal Washington Parks Wilderness Act would not allow movement of the park's boundary – something that would be required if the road was moved. That's why federal action is required to move and reopen the road.

The measure I spoke in support of, [H.R. 2806](#), would allow reopening of the Upper Stehekin Valley Road. During my testimony I mentioned several reasons why Congress should pass the bill, including:

- Reopening the road would restore access to the rustic park facilities and scenic wilderness area within the park. A visitor to Stehekin could once again access the wilderness trails in a weekend.
- It would allow the National Park Service to remain in compliance with the 1995 General Management Plan for the Lake Chelan Recreation Area, which calls for the road to Cottonwood to remain open.
- Passing the measure would allow for equal treatment under the law. As recently as a year ago the boundaries of the Olympic National Park, located in Western Washington, were adjusted along roads to provide for continued road access into the park and road relocation away from river areas. Why, I asked members of the Congressional committee, should the North Cascades National Park be treated differently?
- Opening the road would allow equal access to the North Cascades National Park from both the east and west sides of the state. Right now, only people from Western Washington can easily access the park.
- The bill specifically states that there be no net loss of acreage to the park or the wilderness.
- Reopening the road is critical to the local economy and important to recreationalists, including those with mobility issues.

Following my testimony we received good news – H.R. 2806 is now scheduled for a work session before the full U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources on Sept. 10. This is one baby-step forward in a long, arduous process.

If you'd like to see the entire hearing, my testimony and/or find out more about this issue, please visit my [Web site](#). I will continue to keep you updated on this issue.

## **Update on Apple Capital Loop Trail**

In a previous e-mail update I mentioned the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has initiated a process to analyze various properties statewide for right-of-way purposes. One of those properties is the land along the Columbia River in East Wenatchee, which includes the popular Apple Capital Recreation Loop Trail.

In mid-May I met with representatives from Douglas County, the City of East Wenatchee and the WSDOT to discuss how this would impact the property between the Odabashian Bridge and the George Sellar Bridge. Following that meeting Douglas County and the City of East Wenatchee

contracted with a local consulting firm to study potential uses for the property and what the community would like to see done with it.

The first public meeting on this issue took place on Aug. 4 in the Douglas County 19th Street building. The purpose of the meeting was to educate people about the property between the two bridges so they can give the city and county direction on the future of this area and ask attendees to take a survey on the topic. Although the opportunity to take the formal survey has now passed, there is a new Web site available to help you stay on top of this issue. I encourage you to visit [www.morethanatrail.com](http://www.morethanatrail.com) and sign up to receive e-mail updates. Thanks to those of you who have contacted me about your desire to stay involved in the decisions made regarding the Apple Capital Loop Trail. I am encouraged to see so many in our community working together on this important issue.

### **Breaking ground on wildlife safety fence**

On July 21 the state Department of Transportation began installation of an 8-foot-tall fence along a nine-mile stretch of US 97A between Rocky Reach Dam and Entiat on the Chelan County side of the Columbia River. This corridor has one of the highest wildlife/vehicle collision rates in Washington. Between 1993 and 2003 there were 475 deer killed from Wenatchee to Entiat, and since 2002 there have been 24 bighorn sheep killed on US 97A – 11 in the past year alone.

The new fence is expected to greatly reduce the number of car-animal collisions and increase safety for the more than 6,000 motorists who drive this stretch of road every day.

The all-steel fence will be the first major wildlife fence project for our state transportation department, and the longest steel fence of its kind in Washington. The selection of the materials was based on the desire for a longer lifespan, greater ease of construction and the fact that steel survives wildfires better than wood posts. The fence will include gates and cattle guards for private access roads as well as other important features. Construction of the first phase – the first 4-1/2 miles – will be undertaken this summer. Phase two will be built next summer.

The vision for this fence began nearly 20 years ago when the Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife began discussing it. The project has grown into a partnership between state agencies, conservation, sportsmen and wildlife groups, private landowners and even an insurance company. It's a great example of how a common problem and strong public support can bring a community together to enact a unique solution.

I was honored to speak at the groundbreaking event and am very optimistic that the new fence will keep both drivers and our wildlife more safe.

### **Health care reform – where do we go from here?**

The topic of health care reform seems to be everywhere these days, and we're watching as Congress makes decisions that will affect our health and the health of our children and grandchildren. One of the most important things that must take place for us to enact true, lasting reform is for lawmakers and others involved in the process to focus on the things we agree on, enact those reforms and then work together to hammer out bipartisan solutions to the remaining issues before us.

This may sound difficult, but it is possible – I know because we were able to achieve it when I served in the state House of Representatives. In 1999 and 2000 I was the co-chair of the House Health Care Committee. The House was split; 49 Republicans and 49 Democrats. We each had ideas about how to make positive changes, and knew that accomplishing our goals meant working together. That's just what we did, and in the end we passed two key bills. That's a good lesson for what's happening today. Lasting health care reform can be achieved if we find areas of common ground and work together to accomplish our goals. You can read more about my thoughts in this [opinion-editorial](#) that ran recently in *The Olympian*.

### **In closing...**

It's been good to see and talk with so many of you this summer at various events around the 12th District. If there is anything I can do for you, please don't hesitate to contact me using the contact information below. It's an honor to serve as your state senator.

All the best,

*Linda*

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